



ANITA M. BOCK
Director

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place — Los Angeles, California 90020
(213) 351-5602

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

GLORIA MOLINA
YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE
ZEV YAROSLAVSKY
DON KNABE
MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

January 30, 2001

To: Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich, Mayor
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: 
Anita M. Bock
Director

UPDATE TO APRIL 2000 RESPONSE TO THE FOSTER CARE TASK FORCE REPORT, DATED DECEMBER 1999

In April 2000, the Department of Children and Family Services submitted its response to the Foster Care Task Force Report that had been submitted to the Board of Supervisors in December 1999. The Department's April response addressed each Task Force recommendation by identifying actions to be taken, resources needed to complete the actions, costs associated with implementation, and suggested timeframes in which the recommendations could be implemented.

The following report provides your Board with an update to the response submitted in April 2000. It again identifies the projected costs associated with the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations. These costs total \$3,373,000, with a net County cost of \$540,000. In the Department's April 2000 response we stressed that implementation of the Task Force Recommendations would be extremely difficult if not impossible without additional staff and funding. To date positions and funding have not been allocated, with limited exceptions. The Department will be including, as indicated with specificity in the update, a portion of this cost in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request.

The Department is undergoing a major re-structuring and a major performance based management initiative, both of which address many, if not most, of the recommendations in the Task Force Report. In March 2000, the Board approved the re-structuring of the Department, whereupon the appointment of new senior manager's took place and management training for all of the Department's managerial staff commenced. In April 2000 the position of bureau chief for the Children's Services Bureau was filled, and in August 2000 the Department's Chief Deputy position was finally filled. Three of the Department's four bureau chief positions have yet to be filled with permanent candidates.

After many months of work by the Department, the CAO and the Department of Human Resources, a Board letter was submitted in November requesting the approval of 258 new positions to begin rebuilding the Department's weak infrastructure. Your Board approved this request in December 2000.

The Department has streamlined its organizational structure – reducing seven bureau's to four, made substantial management changes, commenced an ambitious staff and management re-training program, and introduced performance based management. Phase I of our strategic planning efforts resulted in the development of new vision and mission statements for the Department that clearly identified outcomes for children and families. Phase II of our strategic planning, which is currently underway has involved all levels of staff throughout the organization in the development of specific action planning to achieve key Departmental goals and outcomes for the children and families that we serve. After nearly a year of planning, the Bureau of Child Protection, designed to enhance the Department's child protective services investigative and assessment functions, is poised to commence operations pending labor management negotiations.

With the current reform initiatives well underway the Department is confident that major improvements in some of the areas identified will occur over time, despite the lack of dedicated funding to address the Task Force recommendations in their entirety. Should funding and positions be available in FY 2001/2002 to initiate all the recommendations improvements will occur much sooner. The Department will continue adding position and resource requests to its Budget Requests over the next two to three years in the hopes of accomplishing most if not all of the recommended improvements over that period of time.

The preparation of this update would not have been possible without the invaluable assistance of Connie Weaver of my staff and the staff of the CAO, specifically Susan Kerr and Kathy House. We thank them sincerely.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions or if you wish to meet with me to further discuss the Department's update.

AMB:se

Attachment

c: Members of the Foster Care Task Force
Mr. David Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Mr. Lloyd Pellman, County Counsel
Mr. Phalen Hurewitz, Chairman, Commission for Children and Families
The Honorable Terry Friedman, Presiding Judge, Juvenile Court
Community Stakeholders

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES**

**UPDATE
TO THE DEPARTMENT'S APRIL 2000 RESPONSE TO
THE DECEMBER 1999
FOSTER CARE TASK FORCE REPORT**

January 2001

**Anita M. Bock
Director**

**THIS UPDATE SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FOSTER
CARE TASK FORCE REPORT
Dated December 1999 (attached)
and
THE DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE TASK FORCE REPORT
Dated April 2000 (attached)
and
THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES RESPONSE
Dated October 2000 (attached)**

SECTION I

In keeping with the format of the April 2000 response, this section addresses recommendations 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25 of the Task Force Report.

RECOMMENDATION #4

The Los Angeles County request the State of California to provide funding for the necessary resources to meet the requirements for State Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division investigations under SB 933 for foster family agency certified homes.

UPDATE

On June 30, 2000 Governor Davis signed the Budget Act of 2000 (AB 1740) which provided full funding for additional State Community Care Licensing positions for Certified Foster Family Home investigations. Community Care Licensing is in the process of hiring additional staff.

CURRENT STATUS

Recommendation successfully implemented.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Los Angeles County:

- a) Establish uniform quality of life standards for all children in foster care;
- b) Include in foster family agency contracts and state licensed foster home placement agreements, as appropriate, the requirements for education, emancipation, physical health, and mental health as currently provided in Los Angeles County group home contracts;
- c) Incorporate in foster family agency contracts quality of life standards and outcome measures for children in certified foster homes; and
- d) Incorporate in the Department of Children and Family Services State licensed foster home placement agreement quality of life standards and outcome measures for children.

UPDATE

This is a work-in-progress. The Department's April 2000 response indicated a need for additional staff and funding to facilitate the implementation of this recommendation. **These positions and the associated funding will be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request.**

Request: 2 Children's Services Administrator I positions
1 Administrative Manager position
Projected annual cost: \$258,000 NCC \$41,000

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Started work on the development of an addendum to the State Licensed Foster Home Placement Agreement and the Relative Caregiver Forms so as to achieve uniform standards;
2. Initiated collaborative efforts with providers, other County agencies, County Counsel and community stakeholders to enhance quality-of-life standards and develop outcome measures;
3. Trained more than 350 managers in quality assurance and performance based management principles, and encouraged the development of regional workgroups to recommend standards and performance measures to ensure accountability;
4. Started revision to the Department's outcome measures;
5. Worked with the County Welfare Directors Association on a statewide initiative to develop comprehensive quality-of-life standards and outcome measures;
6. Substantially improved its internal review processes relating to issues of quality-of-life (e.g. 2 former foster youth were on the negotiating team for the new group home contract negotiations – their focus was almost entirely directed toward quality-of-life issues).

CURRENT STATUS

This recommendation continues to receive high priority attention from all managers. The approval of the staff requested will speed this process along, as will the recent approval of 14 attorney and paralegal positions for our regional offices. The Department will report its progress in this vital area to the Board as requested.

RECOMMENDATION # 8

Los Angeles County:

- a) Develop specific outcome measures for the five outcome areas adopted by the Board of Supervisors for children: Good Health, Safety and Survival, Economic Well-Being, Social and Emotional Well-Being, and Education and Workforce Readiness; and
- b) Use these specific outcome measures to evaluate the success of all children in foster care.

UPDATE

This is a work in progress. In the Department's April 2000 response, we requested additional positions and funding. The following positions were approved in December 2000:

GIS: 1 EDP Principal Program Analyst position
3 EDP Support Analyst II positions
2 Senior Clerk positions

The Department's development of a Division of Research and Planning is now well underway, and it is anticipated that the GIS Lab will become fully operational in May 2001. Both space and equipment have been secured and as soon as staff are hired work will begin in earnest.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Almost completed Phase II of its strategic planning initiative, which encompasses specific outcome measures and performance improvement measures and action plans (the Department recently submitted a status report to the Board on progress in this area). The new measures will be in place by the beginning of FY 2001/2002;
2. Trained hundreds of managers on performance based management principles and techniques;
3. Continued the work of decentralizing the agency and vesting authority and accountability for outcome based management in the front line managers of the agency;
4. Invested heavily in greater training opportunities for all staff;
5. Continued its re-structuring so as to achieve service integration and accountability;
6. Improved its coordination of the delivery of educational assistance services;
7. Aggressively pursued the effective utilization of the statewide case management system known as CWS/CMS. Our goal is to achieve maximum utilization by June 2001. The Department has developed an "InfoLine" Resource Directory scheduled to be on-line for CSWs by September 2001. Effective April 30, 2001 all CSW and other key staff will be connected to the Internet to facilitate ready access to resources and information;
8. Continued to assist with and place a top priority on the development of an Internet Passport system to track health and education data on our children;
9. Developed a plan, for implementation in May 2001, to strategically deploy emancipated foster youth now employed by the Department, so that they work directly with children in care and on issues relating to quality-of-life.

CURRENT STATUS

The approval of the GIS positions and the recent approval by the Board of the 258 new positions requested to effectuate the restructuring of the Department will substantially strengthen the Department's ability to fully implement this recommendation by fiscal year end 2002. It is anticipated the all the new positions approved will be filled by May 2001.

RECOMMENDATION #9

Los Angeles County:

- a) Interview all foster children privately on quality-of-life issues and incorporate children's responses to outcome measures;
- b) Develop a licensing and overall quality-of-life "score card" on the quality of care children receive in foster care, and develop a formalized system for notifying all social workers, lawyers, CASA's, as well as parents when appropriate, who have a child in a foster home, if any child is removed from that home for licensing or quality-of-life violations.

UPDATE

This is a work in progress. The Department supports and fully concurs with this recommendation, but has not been able to implement this recommendation. It is anticipated that approval of all new positions will create the necessary availability of staff to develop a plan for full implementation.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Stressed the need to all CSWs that children be interviewed privately whenever possible;
2. Continually stressed the need for CSWs to focus most heavily on quality-of-life as opposed to a process emphasis;
3. Commenced the substantial re-design of training so as to achieve this outcome;
4. Developed a plan to expand the use of former foster youth now employed by the Department to focus on quality-of-life and quality assurance issues; and started the re-deployment of these employees;
5. Assured that Foster Care Quality Assurance staff conduct random interviews with children as part of their regular duties; and
6. Continued to audit for compliance with the existing requirement for notice when children are removed from a home for licensing or quality-of-life violations.

CURRENT STATUS

The Department will continue to strive diligently to achieve full implementation of this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION #10

Los Angeles County develop an overall quality-of-life "score card" on the care foster children receive. This "score card" should be performed and evaluated on an annual basis.

UPDATE and CURRENT STATUS

Without a GIS system and full and effective utilization of the CWS/CMS system the development of an effective and statistically sound "score card" is not feasible at this time. This recommendation will be re-evaluated once the GIS Lab is fully operational.

In the meantime the Department:

1. Continues to work closely with the State, County Welfare Director's Association, Children's Planning Council, Services Integration Branch, the Consortium, Children's Services Commission, community stakeholders, providers and advocates on issues relating to the development of adequate outcome and accountability measures;
2. Is training all Department managers and staff in performance based management techniques and principles, which will facilitate the development of effective and accurate "score cards"; and

3. Is aggressively developing outcomes and ensuring that accountability is a top priority for the Department; and
4. Continues an ambitious re-structuring initiative designed to improve the quality of care for children in Los Angeles County's child welfare system.

RECOMMENDATION #11

Los Angeles County establish an independent monitoring/auditing unit under the Department of Children and Family Services to conduct regular systematic audits of foster family certified homes and state licensed foster family homes, including random, unannounced audits at night and on weekends.

UPDATE

This is a work in progress. The Department's April 2000 response outlined the need for additional positions and funding:

Request: 13 Children's Services Administrators I
 1 Children's Services Administrator II
 1 Children's Services Administrator III
 1 Secretary II and 1 Secretary III
 10 Youth Worker positions

Projected Annual Cost: \$1,713,000 NCC \$274,000

These positions and the associated funding will be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request.

CURRENT STATUS

Until such time as positions are approved and funding is allocated the Department remains in Phase I (as outlined in the original response) of this recommendation.

The goal of the Department, as outlined in our original re-structuring plan, remains to create an independent quality assurance section that reports directly to the Chief Deputy Director. Current staffing is inadequate to accomplish this goal at this time. This staffing shortage will be addressed in the Department's FY 2002/2003 Budget Request.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Filled its Chief Deputy Director position;
2. Re-structured its Finance and Administration Bureau;
3. Is about to fill the Bureau Chief position for the Finance and Administration Bureau;
4. Required that all managers undergo a three month training in performance based management; and
5. Designed additional core training in key quality assurance and outcome measure principles for all managers.

Effective and consistent quality assurance, outcome measurement and accountability remain the very highest priority for the Department, and the entire re-structuring currently underway is designed to address these critical issues.

RECOMMENDATION #12

The State Department of Social Services and Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services examine and improve the quality of the foster parent home study process, particularly:

- a) How prospective foster family home studies are conducted;
- b) The differences between foster care home studies and adoption;
- c) The assessment of every prospective foster parent's motivation; and
- d) Ability to become a successful foster parent.

UPDATE

This is a work in progress. In our April 2000 response the Department indicated a need for additional positions and funding:

Request: 2 Children's Services Administrator I positions

Projected annual cost: \$173,000 NCC \$28,000

These positions and the associated funding may be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request, or, in the alternative the Department may explore the feasibility of contracting out for some of these services.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Commenced work on the development of an improved home study evaluation tool that will include relevant components of the adoption home study evaluation process and follow the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting guidelines;
2. Critically reviewed the current process in place;
3. Assessed and compared the process utilized in Cleveland, Ohio, where the Family-to-Family program is fully operational;
4. Reorganized the Family-to-Family pilot and incorporated the concepts behind the program into our strategic and action plans so as to integrate Family-to-Family principles in all regions;
5. Assessed home studies in use by various FFA programs;
6. Compared the foster parent evaluation tool with the adoptions evaluation tool; and
7. Commenced planning with our private not-for-profit business partners to reform the current home study format and process.

This process will be complex and require the participation of many stakeholders. It will also, due to workload implications, require labor management discussions.

CURRENT STATUS

The proposed project to assess needed modifications, research requirements, conduct focus groups and make recommendations to re-design the application and evaluation process for foster homes and foster parents has not occurred, and can not occur until the Department has the staff necessary to perform these

tasks. Also, because existing law requires the development of standardized statewide home study protocols, the process will involve collaboration with other Counties and the State through our work with CWDA.

RECOMMENDATION #13

Los Angeles County establish program statements for foster family agencies and an analogous tool for state licensed foster homes that have standard program components relating to services, needs, and outcomes for children. The program statements should contain a detailed implementation plan for each of the five outcome areas adopted by the Board of Supervisors for children: Good Health, Safety and Survival, Economic Well-Being, and Education/Workforce Readiness.

UPDATE and CURRENT STATUS

This is a work-in-progress. The Department's initial response indicated the need for additional positions and funding (see update to Recommendation # 7 and 12). These positions may be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request, or, in the alternative the Department may explore the feasibility of contracting out for some of these services. Once the necessary staff and/or contractors are hired the Department can commence work on this recommendation in earnest.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Commenced work on the development of an addendum to the State's foster care agreement form to include quality-of-life standards for all children in state licensed foster family homes. This is a complex process and it involves many business partners in the negotiation process and stakeholders in the planning process. (The recent approval of 258 new positions for the Department will, once the positions have been filled, provide the necessary staffing and impetus to accelerate progress in this important area);
2. Scheduled FY 2002/2003 contracts for the inclusion of major changes and scheduled October 2001 for the inclusion date of an interim addendum.
3. Participated in County Welfare Director's Association committee work groups regarding this issue; and
4. Encouraged, supported and collaborated with the State in its efforts to achieve reforms in this vital area.

RECOMMENDATION #15

Los Angeles County provide ongoing monitoring and support for each Foster Family Agency (FFA) certified foster parent to:

- a) Modify foster family agency contracts to require agencies to identify personnel responsible for the quality of care provided by certified foster parents and identify, address, and resolve problems in certified foster homes,
- b) Require foster family agency personnel to visit each certified foster home on a monthly basis,
- c) Provide emergency assistance for foster parents to resolve crises, assist with school difficulties, and advocate for effective treatment and services; and
- d) Provide respite care for foster parents.

UPDATE

Recommendation 15 a) Implemented

Recommendation 15 b) Implemented

Recommendation 15 c) Implemented. The requirements outlining these items have been included in the current Foster Family Agency (FFA) contract.

Recommendation 15 d) is a work-in-progress. The Department has yet to adequately assess the effectiveness, adequacy and availability of respite care for all caregivers. To the extent that respite care is provided by FFAs, reforms in this area will have to be negotiated with FFAs. Respite care involves major funding issues, and Los Angeles County can not make unilateral decisions in this area. With regard to respite care for non-FFA foster homes much work remains to be done to determine the need, cost and available resources before reforms can be implemented. As in other areas the recent approval of new positions for the Department should hasten our ability to address this important area with a view to implementing these recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION #16

Los Angeles County work to establish:

- a) A full time Ombudsperson dedicated to foster parent issues and investigating and resolving complaints;
- b) Support for foster parent's to problem solve and meet periodically for training; and
- c) A process to provide recognition for quality foster parent care.

UPDATE

The Department has always had full time staff dedicated to dealing with foster parent issues and concerns, and investigating and resolving complaints. However, the staffing is inadequate to meet the need and substantial reforms in the process are needed. The Department's April 2000 response indicated a need for additional positions and funding:

Request: 2 Children's Services Administrator I positions
Projected annual cost: \$173,000 NCC \$28,000

These positions may be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request, or, in the alternative the Department may explore the feasibility of contracting out for some of these services.

In the meantime the Department:

1. Is consolidating and restructuring the offices of the Foster Care Ombudsperson, the Foster Care Support Services Section, the Recruitment and Training Section and the Out-of-Home-Care Section, to maximize effectiveness and efficiency;
2. Is developing consistency in the areas of program goals, outcomes, policies and procedures;

3. Is developing an information gathering instrument designed to assess caregiver needs;
4. Has held two one-day retreats with foster parents to assess needs and is utilizing the information gathered to develop strategic plans for meeting those needs, and to develop outcome measures.

CURRENT STATUS

This is a work-in-progress.

RECOMMENDATION #18

Los Angeles County place no more than two foster children in any state licensed foster home or foster family agency certified home, unless:

- a) The foster family has had at least 18 months of experience in caring for foster children and has been reviewed and determined to be a provider of quality care; or
- b) The child is part of a sibling group and the foster family has had a prior or will complete subsequent training in caring for sibling groups, and has been reviewed and determined to be able to meet the needs of each of the children in the home.

UPDATE

Current policy limits newly licensed homes to a maximum capacity of two children for the first 12 months after licensure. To achieve the goal outlined in the Task Force Recommendation Los Angeles County will have to increase its inventory of foster homes substantially. This recommendation has not yet been fully researched and analyzed, and is not currently on the list of most critical priorities. The Department's ability to fully evaluate the feasibility, cost and impact of implementing the recommendation along with the State and other key stakeholders is limited. Retaining a consultant or a university partner to do this research and analysis would speed up the assessment process. The sum of \$125,000 should secure the services of a qualified individual to perform this task for the Department. The Department will analyze the availability and source of funding to accomplish this task, and report back to the Board.

In addition, the recent approval of new positions will strengthen the Department's new Research and Planning Section so as to speed up analysis on future reform recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION #19

Los Angeles County not place children, except a sibling group, in a home where the total number of children residing in the home would exceed six, including foster and non-foster children.

UPDATE

As indicated in the initial response this is already Department policy. To ensure full compliance the Department has subsequently determined the need for a position to audit this area.

Request: 1 Children's Services Administrator I

Projected annual cost: \$86,000 NCC \$14,000

This position and the associated funding will be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request.

CURRENT STATUS

Existing policy.

RECOMMENDATION #21

Los Angeles County

- a) Establish a developmental guide for children who have suffered developmental delays or setbacks from abuse or neglect to ensure that children are receiving necessary attention for proper development.
- b) Incorporate within the guide recommendations for areas including, but not limited to, appropriate interaction, attention, positive encouragement, affection, and play to serve as a check list for foster parents and social workers.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

Work on this recommendation has not been initiated, the issue will be referred to the State's Regional Centers, who serve for discussion.

RECOMMENDATION #22

The Board of Supervisors convene another task force to review the safety and care of the 25,775 Los Angeles children currently in relative foster care placements.

UPDATE and CURRENT STATUS

A Relative Caregiver Task Force was convened and their final report was submitted to the Board in October 2000. The Department has responded to the Task Force recommendations.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Completed substantial analysis on issues facing relative caregivers;
2. Identified the lack of required orientation and training as a major causative factor for the development of caretaker problems, deficiencies, and stress; and as a result has determined that effective July 1, 2001 all relative caregivers will be required to participate in orientation and training. The orientation and training plan is under development with the Community College Training Consortium and existing trainers. It is anticipated that the cost of this requirement will be reimbursable under Title IV-E. In the event additional funding is necessary, the Department will work with the CAO to propose a plan for presentation to the Board; and
3. Commenced the development of a strategic plan to address relative caregiver issues, to incorporate the Relative Care Task Force recommendations into future planning and to substantially increase the level of support for relative caregivers.

RECOMMENDATION #23

The Board of Supervisors authorize an independent study of the highly disproportionate detention rates as related to statewide and County averages of African-American children and other Los Angeles communities with high detention rates in Los Angeles County foster care.

UPDATE and CURRENT STATUS

The Department is preparing a comprehensive plan and concept paper on two key public/private initiatives designed to analyze and assess the factors that bring African American and Latino children into care in disproportionately high rates. The initiatives assess the overall systems and community responses to these children and their families once the courts and the Department exercise jurisdiction over them.

The Department will present its plan to the Board no later than April 15, 2001. The plan will contain independent research components, geographic research areas (incorporating the use of GIS technology), community oversight elements, and State and Board office involvement recommendations. The proposal will also clearly outline a proposed plan of action and timeframe.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Met with various community groups, e.g., NAACP, to start discussions about this important issue;
2. Drafted a plan of action to research and address the issue;
3. Heightened internal sensitivity to the issue and encouraged debate and discussion among staff;
4. Developed a plan to intensify cultural competency training within the agency;
5. Field tested an alternative dispute resolution program, which is now being designed and discussed with the unions prior to full implementation.

RECOMMENDATION #24

If the Task Force recommendations are adopted, we recommend that the Board of Supervisors require the Director of the Department of Children and Family Services and any other affected agencies to report back with their progress on implementing the recommendations within six months. Upon submission of the report to the Board of Supervisors, the Task Force will have 30 days to review the report.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

The Department routinely reports to the Board as requested, and respectfully recommends that the CAO, the Auditor-Controller, and Children's Services Commission be charged with any required oversight and ongoing monitoring, consistent with their Board mandated oversight functions.

RECOMMENDATION #25

We request that the Board of Supervisors write a letter to the State of California regarding recommendations for State implementation of the recommendations approved by the Board of Supervisors.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

Implemented.

The Department submitted copies of the Foster Care Task Force Report and the Department's Response to the Department of Social Services with a request for

comment. The Department of Social Services responded to our request on October 26, 2000. A copy of the State's response is attached.

SECTION II

In keeping with the format of the April 2000 response, this section addresses recommendations 1, 2, 14, 17, and 20 of the Task Force Report.

Recommendation #1 and #2 are combined.

RECOMMENDATION #1

The State of California and Los Angeles County develop and formalize procedures for establishing a coordinated database for both state licensed foster homes and foster family agency certified homes that is capable of:

- a) Tracking incidents, both substantiated and unsubstantiated;
- b) Flagging and monitoring incidents to identify trends and patterns that will initiate investigations that will prevent harm to children;
- c) Tracking children's foster care placement histories and placement failures;
- d) Identifying homes placed on Do Not Refer/Do Not Use status to be shared with other counties and agencies;
- e) Linking investigative and other information concerning the care of children among the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, the State Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division, the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System, the Los Angeles County Department of Probation, and other counties and agencies, as required.

RECOMMENDATION #2

That the State of California and Los Angeles County designate sufficient staff to monitor and respond effectively to data base tracking.

UPDATE

The Department's initial response outlined the need for additional positions and funding:

Request: 7 Children's Services Administrators I positions
 2 Intermediate Typist Clerk positions

Projected Annual Cost: \$770,000 NCC \$123,000

These positions will be included in the Department's FY 2001/2002 Budget Request.

The Department is upgrading the I-Track system. The projected completion date for the upgrade is June 30, 2001. The Department's white paper is still under development. The recent approval of new positions will facilitate our work in this area once those positions are filled.

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is not planning to develop a statewide database or tracking system at this time. CDSS has not identified a new tracking system as part of planned CSW/CMS or CCL systems upgrades.

In the meantime the Department has:

1. Created a new Bureau of Information Systems, thereby elevating technology and systems reform to a top priority;
2. Made management changes within the new bureau;

3. Commenced ambitious and aggressive systems reforms, to include full utilization of the CSW/CMS system by the end of this calendar year;
4. Purchased an unprecedented number of laptop computers and QuickPads for use by front-line staff;
5. Created a GIS Lab for research and analysis;
6. Developed a plan of action for full Internet access by all staff by the end of this fiscal year;
7. Stepped up training in the area of technology; and
8. Required that all managers attend performance based management training.

CURRENT STATUS

This is a work-in-progress. Connectivity and full systems utilization is a huge and compelling issue in systems reform. Los Angeles County faces major deficits in the technology arena. The development and creation of the following should all improve the technology deficits that exist, but they do not go far enough to bring about the types of immediate and comprehensive systems, reforms and enhancements that are necessary to bring about desperately needed changes:

1. An integrated Los Angeles County strategic plan;
2. The CAO Services Integration Branch;
3. The Children's Planning Council's Data Integration Initiative;
4. The County's CIO strategic planning initiatives;
5. Upgrades to the CWS/CMS system;
6. The Department's new Information Systems Bureau and ambitious internal technology reforms.

The State has not yet placed Internet based systems on a priority list for analysis, development and review, which we are urging it to do. This will cause greater and greater problems for counties the size of Los Angeles, who can not rely solely on the CSW/CMS system to manage its caseload. Internet based systems are the future.

Therefore, in the current environment this will remain a work-in-progress for many years to come. The Department will continue working closely with the State, with the County Welfare Directors Association, and with all local initiatives and groups/Departments to elevate technology issues and bring about systems reform and improvement.

RECOMMENDATION #14

Los Angeles County provide on-going monitoring and support for each state licensed foster parent to:

- a) Identify personnel responsible for providing on-going support to state licensed foster parents to improve children's health, safety, and quality of life,
- b) Identify, address and resolve problems in state licensed foster homes,
- c) Require foster family agency personnel to visit each state licensed foster home on a monthly basis,
- d) Provide emergency assistance for foster parents to resolve crises, assist with school difficulties and advocate for effective treatment and services, and
- e) Provide respite care for foster parents.

UPDATE

- 14 a) Procedure Implemented - need to monitor for compliance
- 14 b) Procedure Implemented - need to monitor for compliance
- 14 c) Procedure Implemented - need to monitor for compliance

14 d) Not implemented. The Department lacks the staff to perform this function. The Department will take steps to develop a plan for implementation of this recommendation after the end of this fiscal year. First we must fill new positions approved by the Board, implement our plans to utilize former foster youth now employed by the Department in such areas; and develop the technological capability to document, assign and act on such exit interviews.

AB 2012 (Shelley) which was vetoed by the Governor, would have expanded the authority to operate Foster Youth Services education programs and established new program standards and requirements. In his veto message, the Governor noted that the 2000-01 Budget Act contains \$7.6 million for these programs and the Budget Conference Committee rejected a further expansion. CDSS is currently distributing instructions for these funds to the 58 counties through County Fiscal Letters.

AB 2136 (Maldonado) which was also vetoed, would have required the Long-Term Care Council to:

- a) establish a uniform definition of respite care for future legislative change;
- b) develop a minimum data set of information on family caregiver programs that provide caregiver support; and
- c) improve service coordination between existing programs. This information would have been included in the California Health and Human Services Agency Long-Term Council's 2001 report to the Legislature.

This legislation, if enacted, would have been the first step in establishing a coordinated statewide respite care program. The Department is unable to locate this respite care program funding in the Governor's 2001/2002 Budget.

CURRENT STATUS

The Department has not implemented this recommendation. The Department will continue to address the issues raised in this recommendation in it's restructuring, in it's performance measures and outcomes development, and in it's Phase II strategic planning and implementation action plans. This recommendation has workload implications and any reforms in this area may be subject to union MOU requirements.

The issue of respite care has been addressed elsewhere in this update.

RECOMMENDATION #17

The State of California and Los Angeles County work together to:

- a) Increase the hours of required annual training for state-licensed foster parents and foster family agency-certified foster parents from 8 hours to 15 hours per year;
- b) Include, but not limit to, cultural diversity discipline techniques, child development and parenting skills, in foster parent training; and
- c) Make best efforts to include current and former foster children in foster parent training.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

The Community College Foundation's Foster and Kinship Care Educational Program is funded by the State Chancellor of the California Community Colleges. This program provides educational programs for foster parents and relative caregivers through the community colleges

Of the 21 community colleges in Los Angeles, 18 offer Foster and Kinship Care Educational programs. During the last year, the program provided 918 classes to caregivers. Some classes are provided off campus to make them more accessible to specific communities. There were 4544 participants in the classes held this past year.

Some of the classes offered include:

- Information for new relative caregivers
- Kin-GAP Program orientation
- Parenting a child with attachment difficulties
- Anger management
- Discipline
- Nutrition
- Managing medications
- Teens as parents
- Teen suicide
- Dynamics of caring for children with attention deficit disorders
- HIV and AIDS prevention classes
- Learning Disabilities
- Autism
- Attachment Disorders
- Navigating the Special Education Maze
- Working with schools
- Understanding therapy
- Working with children with Diabetes
- Diversity
- Children's sexual development
- How to access Mental Health Services
- D-rate pre-service training
- F-rate per-service training
- Gang prevention

The State has recognized the need for this training by increasing the funding to the community colleges from \$220,000 three years ago, to \$2.8 million this year.

In the meantime the Department:

1. Is collaborating with the Community College Foundation regarding the development of other basic orientation specific to relatives and more extensive training programs;
2. Is consulting with other community agencies with resources to address training issues.

RECOMMENDATION #20

The State of California and Los Angeles County work together to:

- a) Establish an Ombudsperson for youth in foster homes, modeled after the Ombudsperson under the Auditor-Controller for youth in group homes;
- b) Incorporate the Foster Youth Bill of Rights in foster family agency contracts and in placement agreements with state licensed foster homes;
- c) Insure all children 11 and older (and younger children when appropriate) and their foster parents are provided the Foster Youth Bill of Rights and Legal Rights of Teens when a child is placed in a state licensed or foster family agency certified home; and
- d) Develop a process for interviewing all children of school age 1 when they leave a foster home about their experiences and feelings about their former foster home.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

- 20 a) Established.
- 20 b) Policy implemented – need to monitor for compliance.
- 20 c) Policy implemented – need to monitor for compliance.

20 d) This recommendation has not been implemented. It will require a staff person and consultant to develop a structured interview guide and a curriculum for staff training. The consultant will have to be an expert in the field of effective communication and interviewing techniques for children at different levels of developmental stages and varying levels of cognitive and emotional capacity.

While the research and design of the evaluation tools and staff training curriculum can be completed during this fiscal year, it is beyond our capacity to implement this recommendation at this time.

The projected cost for a consultant is:
\$75,000

The Department will take steps to develop a plan for implementation of this recommendation after the end of this fiscal year. First we must fill new positions approved by the Board, implement our plans to utilize former foster youth now employed by the Department in such areas; and develop the technological capability to document and act on such exit interviews.

SECTION III

In keeping with the format of the April 2000 response, this section addresses recommendations 3, 5, and 6 of the Task Force Report.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Los Angeles County seek legislation that the State, with and through the County, create and fund, on a pilot basis, a joint Foster Care Monitoring and Evaluation Authority, charged with developing and implementing uniform and universal monitoring and evaluation of the experience and environment of all children in foster care.

UPDATE AND CURRENT STATUS

The Department does not concur with this recommendation. The reasons for this were addressed in the April 2000 response. Reference should also be made to the State's response.

The Department needs to be given the time and support to develop, staff and refine our own oversight procedures as described under several recommendations above. We also need time to evaluate, in a joint effort with caregivers and the community, the results of these efforts. An evaluation will provide the information needed to determine appropriate future steps.

No information has been provided to support that such a measure will increase the effectiveness of monitoring. The County is currently grappling with ways to increase communication and effectiveness between the numerous existing agencies that currently provide services and oversight to children and families.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Los Angeles County seek State legislation and sufficient funding to:

- a) Eliminate face-to-face CSW visitation waivers for all children in state licensed foster homes and foster family agency certified homes and
- b) Require CSWs to visit each child face-to-face at a minimum of once a month.

UPDATE

This issue is currently the subject of litigation. The Board has been fully briefed in closed session, and has taken the matter under advisement.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Los Angeles County seek State legislation and sufficient funding to allow the State Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division to make unannounced visits to foster family agency certified homes.

UPDATE

The Department convened three key stakeholder planning meetings during the months of October – December 2000 on priority legislative initiatives and this issue was not raised by as a priority. This Department lacks the necessary legislative analyst staff to make this issue a priority at this time. The Department

recommends that the Children's Commission be tasked with the development of this recommendation should it be deemed a priority for this legislative session.

#####